

Public Instructions You May Be Asked to Follow

Social distancing is used to keep people at safe distances from each other to prevent exposure to flu. For example, usual meetings may be cancelled. Public Health officials **may** ask people to stay away from large crowds.

During **quarantine**, officials ask a person who is still well but has been exposed to flu, to stay home for the period of one incubation cycle (specific for flu), to prevent the spread of infection if he or she becomes sick.

During **isolation**, officials ask a person sick with flu to stay home until he or she cannot spread flu to others.

Most will follow these instructions **voluntarily** because when you are sick with the flu, you want to stay home and rest. As in other states, Virginia law provides for mandatory enforcement of these instructions, if needed.

NOTE: Mandatory enforcement may occur at the beginning or end of a pandemic wave to help slow the early spread, or to help end the wave early.

Vaccine, Antiviral Drugs & Masks During A Pandemic

Vaccine, antiviral drugs and masks may be in short supply. Initially, medical and EMS personnel who are at highest risk of exposure to the flu will get these items, so they can stay healthy and take care of the sick, or recover to get back to taking care of the sick.

The CDC will post guidelines for mask use by citizens. If you decide to wear a surgical or N-95 mask, please follow the instructions that come with it. You **MUST** continue to wash your hands and cover your cough when using a mask.

NOTE: To slow or stop a wide-spread outbreak of the flu, **guidelines may change. You need to stay informed.**

For more information:

www.cdc.gov
www.pandemicflu.gov
www.vdh.virginia.gov/pandemicflu



LENOWISCO Health District

Protecting Yourself from THE FLU

A flu outbreak is possible in any year. You should learn more about this potential threat and prepare for it. This guide provides information about the seasonal flu, bird flu, the new H₁N₁ flu, pandemic flu, and how to protect yourself.

Definitions

Flu (short for influenza) is a viral infection of the lungs which may spread from person to person.

Seasonal flu is a common form of flu that spreads each winter. Flu vaccine, with hand washing, is the best protection from infection.

Avian or Bird flu is a type of flu that primarily affects poultry and wild birds. Humans get this flu through very close contact with infected birds. Typically, bird flu cannot easily be spread from person to person.

H₁N₁ flu is a novel (new) type of flu that appeared in Spring 2009, and has some human, bird, and pig components. It is a mutated form of influenza virus that causes illness among people.

Pandemic flu is a human flu that breaks out and spreads person to person around the globe with very little warning. Currently, there is no flu pandemic.

Please remember these points:

1. Personal preparation NOW can decrease your risk during a pandemic, as with any other emergency.
2. Practicing good respiratory and hand hygiene EVERY DAY prevents exposure to all flu viruses.

Things will change during a pandemic. Be prepared for a change in daily routine and make backup plans now. It will be important to keep informed. During a pandemic, Public Health will give advice on how to avoid becoming sick and what to do if you are sick.

Seasonal and New Strains of Flu are Different

Seasonal influenza ("flu") is caused by one of several types of viruses that affect the nose, throat, and lungs, lasting between 3 - 7 days. Symptoms include fever, headaches, cough, aches, and sore throat.

Novel H₁N₁ influenza symptoms are similar to seasonal flu but **may become** more severe. Any influenza virus that becomes the source of a pandemic will initially have characteristics that are undefined until sufficient experience is gained with it.

NOTE: There have been outbreaks that have affected the world up to 1.5 years. In that time, a community may have 2 – 4 flu waves lasting up to 4 months.

Influenza Outbreaks

Seasonal Flu

- Occurs each winter.
- Affects about 10% of the population.
- For most, it is unpleasant but not life-threatening.
- Those at most risk are the very young, and the very old.*
- Annual flu vaccine is the best way to protect against seasonal flu.
- Antiviral drugs are available to treat those at special risk.

Any New Strain (H₁N₁), etc.

- May occur any time of year.
- May affect up to 50% of the population.
- May be more serious than seasonal flu.
- People of every age may be at risk.
- A vaccine will probably not be available early in an outbreak.
- Antiviral drugs may be in limited supply and the virus may be resistant to them.

* Others at risk include those with HIV/AIDS, cancer, and other chronic conditions such as kidney, lung or heart disease.

Practice good health habits daily to help prevent the flu

Flu may spread person to person when an infected person coughs, sneezes or touches things others use. Practice these healthy habits to prevent the flu.

- **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue or the inside of your elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- **Wash your hands** often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds. If water is unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand gel.
- **Don't touch your eyes, nose, and mouth.** Flu spreads when a person touches items contaminated with the virus and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Stay home when you're sick** or have flu symptoms. (see self-care tips on the next page)
- **Avoid close contact** with people who are ill. Maintain at least a 3 feet distance (6 feet preferred).
- **Disinfect items people touch** (like door knobs, toys, remote controls, phones, and switches). Use a labeled household disinfectant or chlorine bleach mixture*
- An **annual flu vaccine** can reduce your risk of getting seasonal flu.
- **Practice other good health habits.** Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat properly.
- **Avoid smoking.** Smoking may increase the risk of serious problems if you get the flu.
- Also, if you are planning travel to areas with reported flu cases, avoid crowds, farms, or direct contact with sick individuals. For more information, go to: www.cdc.gov/travel.

*** You can make a disinfectant by mixing ¼ cup store brand chlorine bleach with 1 gallon of cool water. Allow 10 minutes of contact on surface before wiping disinfectant off. Make solution daily.**

Self-care tips for Flu

Symptoms of flu for those ≥ 5 years old include:

- Fever (up to 102-103 °F)
- Chills and sore throat
- Fatigue and weakness
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Aches and pains
- Headaches
- Dry cough
- Loss of appetite

Influenza is more severe in children under 5 years, especially those between the ages of 6 and 12 months.

- A fever can be the only symptom in babies.
- Children may have seizures, vomiting, irritability, sensitive eyes, headache, ear infections, red sore eyes, and sore muscles.
- Temperatures are often over 103.1° F.
- Children 3 years old or younger may have nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach pain.

REMEMBER: The very young do not know how to tell people if they are sick with the flu. They may have a hoarse and barking cough, be irritable, and eat poorly.

Home treatment for flu:

- Rest in bed (especially if a fever is present).
- Drink light liquids (water, tea, soda pop, juice, clear soup, rehydration solutions* etc.). It is important to offer fluids early to prevent dehydration.
- Eat foods that you feel **your system can handle** (e.g., low fat, “light” foods).
- Take **aspirin-free** pain relievers (e.g., acetaminophen or ibuprofen) as directed by your doctor to reduce fever and relieve aches and pains.
 - Do not wake a child to give medication.
 - Ibuprofen should not be used for infants less than 4 months old.

WARNING: Avoid aspirin or aspirin-containing products to prevent Reye Syndrome, a rare but serious disease.

Recovery from flu:

Once the worst has passed, continue to eat and rest for a faster recovery. Increase your activity based on how you feel. **NOTE:** the only real cure for flu is time.

*Rehydration solutions restore water and minerals. To prepare your own, mix the ingredients below until the sugar disappears:

- 4 cups of clean water
- 2 tablespoons of sugar
- ½ teaspoon of salt

When to seek medical advice for an adult

If you have flu symptoms and are at risk for complications, consult your doctor right away. Those usually considered at high risk for complications include:*

- People 65 years or older.
- People with chronic heart, lung disease or any other condition that requires regular medical attention (e.g., congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes).
- People who have diseases or treatments that weaken the immune system.
- Pregnant women.
- Young children (see next panel).

*During the 1918 pandemic, young healthy adults were at greatest risk for complications because of the particular flu virus strain. So, the important point is that **EVERYONE** is at risk of getting the flu, which is why everyone needs to take the steps outlined to prevent getting the flu!

NOTE: If antiviral medications are appropriate AND available, your doctor may prescribe this to reduce symptom duration and prevent more serious problems.

When to take an adult to the emergency room

Seek care if you have any one of the following:

- Shortness of breath while resting or doing little.
- Difficult or painful breathing.
- Coughing up bloody sputum or phlegm.
- Wheezing.
- Chest pain.
- Fever for 3 to 4 days without improvement.
- Feeling better and then suddenly having a high fever or becoming ill again.
- Extreme drowsiness and difficulty awakening.
- Disorientation or confusion.
- Severe earache.
- Sudden inability to function in a normally independent elderly person.
- Constant vomiting.

NOTE: If you have bacterial pneumonia, you will need antibiotics. Otherwise, antibiotics are **NOT** needed to treat flu which is caused by a virus.

When to seek medical advice for a child

Seek medical care if a child has influenza and any one of the following conditions:

- 3 months old or younger.
- Has a heart or lung disease or any chronic illness requiring regular medical care.
- Has a disease or treatments that weaken the immune system.
- Takes aspirin regularly for a medical condition.
- Has a change in breathing (such as breathing fast) or difficulty breathing.
- Is drowsy and loses interest in playing, watching TV, eating or drinking.
- Is very irritable and cries a lot.
- Urinates less than usual (less often than every 6 hours while awake) or has dry diaper for more than 3 hours if younger than 6 months, or longer than 6 hours if 6 to 23 months old.

NOTE: If antiviral medications are appropriate AND available, your child's doctor may prescribe this to reduce symptom duration and prevent more serious problems.

When to take a child to the emergency room

Go to an emergency room right away if your child:

- Has severe trouble breathing that is not caused by a stuffy nose.
- Has blue lips or hands, suddenly becomes pale, or has cold legs.
- Is droopy or unable to move.
- Is so sleepy that he or she does not respond when you try to get him or her up.
- Shows sign of pain, such as headache or stiff neck, especially if he or she also has a fever, is listless and his or her eyes are sensitive to light.
- Seems confused.
- Has a seizure.
- Has any of the symptoms listed under “When to take an adult to the emergency room.”

NOTE: If your child has bacterial pneumonia, he or she needs antibiotics. Otherwise, antibiotics are **NOT** needed to treat flu which is caused by a virus.

Preparation at home is important

Talk about how and where loved ones would be cared for if they become sick, and what you need to care for them at home. Discuss end-of-life issues with your loved ones. Adults should consider who will make medical decisions for themselves if they cannot and prepare a living will now.

NOTE: Plan NOW for someone to care for children, those with special needs and pets if their guardians are sick.

Like other emergencies, during pandemic, have at least two weeks worth of food, non-perishables, and health and emergency supplies. ***This includes prescription drugs.*** These items may be difficult to get during a pandemic.

NOTE: Many health plans allow ordering 90 day supplies of medications. Ask your doctor if this is right for you.

Items to have on hand for an extended stay at home:

- ☐ **Ready-to-eat canned meats, fish, fruits, vegetables, beans, and soups**
- ☐ **Protein or fruit bars**
- ☐ **Dry cereal or granola**
- ☐ **Peanut butter or nuts**
- ☐ **Dried fruit**
- ☐ **Crackers**
- ☐ **Canned juices**
- ☐ **Bottled water**
- ☐ **Canned or jarred baby food and formula**
- ☐ **Manual can opener**
- ☐ **Garbage bags**
- ☐ **Tissues, toilet paper, disposable diapers**
- ☐ **Pet food**

- ☐ **Medications and supplies such as glucose monitoring equipment**
- ☐ **Soap and water or alcohol-based (60 – 95%) hand wash**
- ☐ **Medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen**
- ☐ **Thermometer (one for each member of the household)**
- ☐ **Anti-diarrheal medication**
- ☐ **Rehydration solutions (see box on self-care panel)**
- ☐ **Cough syrup**
- ☐ **Portable radio**
- ☐ **Flashlight**
- ☐ **Batteries**